



art21.org/richardmosse



Richard Mosse

ABOUT

Born

1980 (Kilkenny, Ireland)

Education

Kings College, London, BA
Yale University, MFA

Lives and Works

New York, NY

About the Artist

Richard Mosse's photographs and films document armed conflicts, humanitarian crises, and environmental crimes, addressing the power and failures of “the documentary image.” His work complicates the production and aesthetics of existing photojournalism and scientific photography, highlighting their insufficiencies and seeking to overcome them. Embarking on multi-year-long projects of repurposing highly specialized film technology and military equipment, Mosse subverts their original intended uses to instead shed light on global concerns.

TEACHING CONNECTIONS

Media and Materials

photography
video

Key Words and Ideas

activism
catastrophe
climate crisis
documentary
ecology

humanitarian
power
repurpose
subversion
technology

Related Artists

John Akomfrah
Mel Chin
Minerva Cuevas
Stan Douglas
LaToya Ruby Frazier
David Goldblatt
Alfredo Jaar
Hiwa K
Liz Magic Laser

Cannupa Hanska Luger
Guadalupe Maravilla
Richard Misrach
Catherine Opie
Trevor Paglen
Elle Pérez
Postcommodity
Michael Rakowitz
Doris Salcedo

“We can't see the climate changing,
and that's really the inherent
problem. It's on a scale beyond
what we can perceive.” —Richard Mosse

How to Use This Guide

Art21 encourages active engagement when teaching with our films. The questions and activities below are recommendations for incorporating Art21 films featuring Richard Mosse into your classroom. Each class will likely require different adaptations for best results.

NOTE: Please view all films before sharing them with your students.

Before Viewing

Establish key ideas, in anticipation of viewing the film(s):

- ① Art21 produces documentary films about contemporary artists and their work. What other kinds of things do documentary filmmakers and photographers focus on?
- ② What do the terms “subvert” and “subversion” mean? When might artists engage with the idea of subversion?
- ③ What is a camera good for? Conversely, what kinds of things does a camera not necessarily portray?

While Viewing

Support active viewing, and pause the film to clarify particular ideas:

- ① List the different issues that Mosse is grappling with in his work.
- ② How does Mosse subvert the intended use for some of the equipment he utilizes? What kinds of equipment does Mosse use, and how does he use it in ways that differ from its intended purpose?
- ③ How does Mosse push the limits of the camera and the documentary image? How is Mosse an activist?

After Viewing

Follow-up on key ideas and synthesize information learned from the film(s):

- ① Mosse says, “My power, if I have any, is to be able to show you the things that I’ve seen in a more powerful way than perhaps the pictures you’ve seen in the newspaper of the same thing.” What does Mosse do that enables viewers to see and perceive global crises and conflicts in a more significant way? How might works of art allow us to experience things differently than, for example, seeing the same thing in the news?
- ② How do the photos and videos Mosse makes affect you as a viewer? What might Mosse want viewers to know about and do in response to the photographs and films he makes?

Related Activities

Engaging in creative activities after watching Art21 films can reinforce learning and stimulate ideas. Art21 encourages educators to adapt these activities to their classrooms.

- ✓ Give a tool or technology a new use in order to make a work of art. How can you, for example, utilize a kitchen tool for something beyond its intended use? Or even a technology often used in a school setting? How can you subvert the intended use to make something creative?
- ✓ Through a written article, essay, or documentary photo essay, uncover what’s “not seen” when it comes to a local issue or community challenge. How can the article, essay, or photos challenge the viewer to take action in some way?